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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [KPAO](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: MPS BLAME RULING FAMILY FOR NATIONAL SOCCER TEAM'S
DISMAL PERFORMANCE

Sensitive But Unclassified; not for Internet distribution.

¶1. (SBU) As Kuwait returns from its worst performance ever at the 18th annual Gulf Football Tournament in the UAE -- drawing one match and losing two -- Members of Parliament (MPs) minced no words in laying blame squarely on the ruling family. (Note: Kuwait has won the tournament nine times. Shaykh Ahmed Al-Yousef Al-Saud Al-Sabah is the head of the Kuwait Football Association, which manages Kuwait's national football team. End note.) Kuwait's performance sparked a loud public outcry complete with public demonstrations, mock funerals (for Kuwaiti sports), and public hand-wringing from a host of commentators. Kuwaiti teams have lately performed poorly at a number of other regional sporting events.

¶2. (SBU) At a January 28 seminar on Kuwaiti sports hosted by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a liberal political association, MPs Ahmed Saadoun, Mohammed Jassem Al-Sager, and Faisal Al-Shaye slammed the ruling Al-Sabah family for "kidnapping" sports in Kuwait and appointing incompetent administrators, and promised to pass legislation to "salvage Kuwaiti sports." Al-Sager, the Chairman of Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, blamed Al-Sabah family members for "monopolizing" key sports management positions and suggested that "ruling family members who are incompetent should stay at home." Al-Shaye said Kuwait's most recent sporting failure "has clearly demonstrated the power struggle within the ruling family over sports." Al-Saadoun argued that sports in Kuwaiti were "kidnapped by some people who care only for power, fame, and the spotlight." The MPs' comments received wide media coverage.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Young Kuwaitis are passionate about sports, particularly soccer, so it is not surprising that the opposition politicians are rushing to exploit the perception of ruling family bungling. It is not unusual in Kuwait to hear harsh public criticism of ruling family members--the Amir and Crown Prince aside.

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